

## UNEF 1

### Beirut Lebanon

## BEIRUT DIARY Gord Jenkins

### UNEF

From Jun 1964 to May 1965



*Picture –Capt. Gord Jenkins –Beirut Airport Movement Control Officer  
UNEF 1 –the one and only time in full uniform greeting new UNEF  
Commander Indian General Rykhe on his way to take over as CO in Gaza  
– he was to leave quickly a few months later when Egypt told UNEF to  
leave Egypt ASP*

**I – and soon Jan – will live in Beirut –hopefully during a quiet time of that turbulent country. Or at least it appears quiet – but below the surface it is simmering.**

**Lebanon is at a crossroads –but Lebanon always has been a crossroads!**

**Crossroads – the Turks – the French – the Syrians all- pulling at Lebanon - right now I suspect it is Syria pulling the strings.**

**As well the religious of Lebanon does not help – a mixture of 2 types of Christians –Orthodox and “Marrionite” aka Roman Catholic) – two types of Moslem (Shiite and Sunni) –not to mention the Druze. – what a mixture to keep in “*ecological political balance*”**

**Jan and I live in Ashrafieh – a Marrionite suburb of west Beirut. Most of the English and Americans lived in cental west Ras Beirut or Raoche – the “English quarter” or a ghetto of Americans and Europeans – “Westerners”.**



***Jan – the day after she arrived Beirut !***

**We enjoy our apartment surrounded by the culture and day to day living of a Beirut resident. Jan hollers down at the merchant push cart on the street – she lowers her basket from the apartment – he puts fish/bread /whatever in basket – Jan pulls up basket – he hollers up his price in Arabic - Jan answers in English which does not affect the negotiations in the slightest – the “negotiating “goes on– the deal is reached – the item is hauled up in basket on rope and money is lowered in basket – both sides “mutter’ and merchant goes onto next apartment.**

**Jan got quite used to it quickly – bartering and bargaining- pushing to front of meat line in front of butcher- finding out where you could buy some North American or European food and goods. “Getting by “ on local soap which came in bags and scooped out by the litre at a “negotiated” price – soap was called in Arabic “Tide” soap!! Cans of anything like Campbell’s soup you could not buy locally – but oranges and lemons and local vegetables were “pennies”**



**As you can tell from the pictures inserted –I was doing Movement control at Beirut Airport for UNEF. It was quite a fortunate turn of**

**events as I t time – I was only UNEF Officer in Beirut or Lebanon for that matter- Beirut was a quite and peaceful place at that time – and since it was peaceful it was safe to bring Jan over.**



**At least it appears quiet on the surface – as I drive around Beirut I can see barbed wire ready to be rolled across the street- I can see every male carries a handgun under his suit coat –too obvious-or in a holster like in a cowboy movie. I am the only one disarmed – which makes me safer than if I am armed. I learned this at check points on the Gaza Strip – when stopped at a checkpoint barrel in the middle of the road nowhere by Egyptian police or army or Palestinian “irregulars”- as soon as they looked in the UNEF vehicle and saw you were not armed – no pistol- no AK 47 – nothing – the people pointing the weapons changed their attitude to you – completely. The weapons were dropped - or leaned on – or put aside. They joked with you – bartered with you –chatted with you laughing – and – after refusing politely coffee – waved you on. You were not a threat to them – we were armed with a blue beret –**

**There is no way I would have brought Jan into the Gaza Strip – no way – too uncertain and dangerous. There would have been no suitable**



**accommodation for Jan in El Arish or Rafah – may be Gaza City but that would have been too far to get “home” at night!**



***Picture :The Sporting club –private guarded beach***

**So I have found a nice furnished apartment in Ashrafieh Beirut- the Christian Maronite ( a breakaway Catholic Christian ) part of west Beirut. East Beirut is Shiite and Sunni Moslem –then there is a Greek Orthodox enclave an Armenian enclave – all carved out geographically by blocks of streets – each with barbed wire coils all ready to be rolled out on the street – what a tinderbox!!**



**I found the apartment – to rent – fully furnished – through a friend of Jan – a Lebanese friend from Ghana named Dolly. Her husband is Palestinian who works at Pam Am airlines downtown Beirut.**

**A nice quiet man – not a militant bone in his body. He is one of the few Palestinians that I have met integrated into Lebanese society: probably**

because he is a Christian.



*Jan all dressed up and ready to go out –Beirut had quite a Parisian type of night life – Beirut is called “The Paris of the Middle East”*

**The rest of the Palestinians live in refugee camps which are as large as and dirty and poor and “shanty town” as any I saw in Gaza strip.**



*Picture –picture taken of Palestinian camp from moving UN vehicle – hence blurred – one dared not stop! – but general dilapidated is shanties of Palestinian refugee camp surrounded by new Lebanese apartments*

As is the custom here, Maroon is 6 to 8 years older than her. In some cases the age difference is so large I have mistaken the couple to be father – daughter.

Anyway she found me a fully furnished apartment – two Iranian students were in it before us – (the books they leave are in Persian or Pharsi) it is sparse but has the essentials. A propane stove – 3 taps – hot /cold and drinking! ( You still have to boil the drinking water and put in a sterilized bottle in the fridge) . The mattress has not one spring in it – this takes some getting used to. Every apartment in Beirut has a big hook hanging in the middle of living room – why – for a chandelier of course. Must be a carryover from the French regime. Oh yes – of course a French bidet and no bath! You close bathroom door and turn on shower with water flying all over room from bathroom shower nozzle. Then you get an old fashioned corn broom and you sweep water down drain!



**and I work at airport . Jan tans at a private beach in Beirut called “The Sporting Club”. My job at the airport was not onerous as I met re would be other visitors – the Caribou from El Arish and Gaza daily or every second day. Occasionally there would be other visitors- once a month the Brazilian DC – 6 would come in on its way to El Arish (The Brazilian plane would always break down in Athens or Rome –usually both!!)**

**Sometimes we might even have the “good fortune” of a plane direct from Canada –but this was rare – as the RCAF North Star weekly flight went direct from Pisa Italy through Athens direct to El Arish.**





*The arriving scheduled El Arish Gaza Beirut run*









*All three pictures above of visiting Canadian RCAF Yukon*



*Brazilian C-54 aircraft which was supposed to arrive weekly but always “broke down” in Rome and/or Athens*